

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 MOSCOW 2215

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT UR US
SUBJECT: U.S. SOVIET POLICY UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION:
IV. NEGOTIATING WITH THE SOVIETS

REF: (A) MOSCOW 1542, (B) MOSCOW 1543, (C) MOSCOW 1544

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. FOLLOWING IS THE FOURTH AND LAST OF THE EMBASSY'S SERIES (REFTELS) ON U.S. SOVIET POLICY UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. THE OVERALL IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE USSR SINCE THE 1972 SUMMIT HAS PRODUCED A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CONTACTS BETWEEN US, RANGING FROM SUMMIT MEETINGS TO DELEGATIONS OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND EXCHANGES OF RARE ART OBJECTS. THE ODDS ARE THAT THESE CONTACTS WILL GROW DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, AS WE CONTINUE TO EXPLORE WITH THE SOVIETS AREAS WHERE OUR INTERESTS OVERLAP. OWING TO THE EXTREME CENTRALIZATION OF DECISION-MAKING IN THE USSR, HOWEVER, SOVIET AUTHORITIES ARE IN A POSITION TO FIELD A PREDOMINATELY MONOLITHIC, WELL-PREPARED AND EXPERIENCED NEGOTIATING TEAM ON VIRTUALLY ANY ISSUE. THE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS OF THE SOVIET BUREAUCRATIC MACHINE MEANS THAT ITS GENERAL NEGOTIATING TECHNIQUE IS PREDICTABLE. THIS, IN TURN, ENABLES US TO DRAW UPON OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE WITH THE SOVIETS IN ORDER TO OUTLINE THE
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CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION OF SOVIET POLICY AND THEN TO SUGGEST A NUMBER OF GUIDELINES FOR APPROACHING, NEGOTIATING, AND IMPLEMENTING AGREEMENTS WITH THE USSR. END SUMMARY.

2. THIRTY-ONE YEARS AGO GEORGE KENNAN, THEN CHARGE IN MOSCOW, DREW UP A SET OF RULES FOR DEALING WITH THE SOVIET REGIME. WHILE U.S. SOVIET RELATIONS HAVE SINCE

CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY, KENNAN'S UNDERLYING CONCERN
REMAINS VALID FOR THE PERIOD 1977-80. NAMELY:

-- METHODOLOGY AND TACTICS IN DIPLOMACY ARE
FREQUENTLY NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN CONCEPT AND STRATEGY; AND

--SOVIET DIPLOMACY IS DISTINCTIVE, REQUIRING
US TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE SOVIET APPROACH TO
NEGOTIATION, AND ON OCCASION TO MODIFY OUR OWN APPROACH
SO AS TO MAXIMIZE OUR EFFECTIVENESS IN DEALING WITH THEM.

3. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS. BOTH THE CONCEPTION AND THE
EXECUTION OF SOVIET POLICY ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM
OUR OWN. IN ITS LONG-TERM CONCEPTION, SOVIET POLICY IS
MORE DEFINITELY AND CONSISTENTLY ARTICULATED THAN OURS:
EACH CPSU CONGRESS IS, FOR EXAMPLE, PRESENTED WITH A
CAREFULLY FORMULATED STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF WORLD POLITICS
AND WITH A SET OF BROAD STRATEGIC GOALS (AS OUTLINED IN
REF A). BECAUSE OF THE CPSU'S CONTINUING DETERMINATION
TO PRESERVE ITS MONOPOLY OF POLITICAL POWER, THESE
ANALYSES AND GOALS CANNOT BE OPENLY CHALLENGED WITHIN
THE USSR, AND ARE CONSIDERED BINDING UPON ALL COMPONENTS
OF THE SOVIET REGIME. IN PARTICULAR, SOVIET NEGOTIATORS
ARE BOUND BY A TACTICAL APPROACH WHICH IS SUBORDINATE
TO SPECIFIC STRATEGIC GOALS THAT IN TURN ARE ROOTED IN
THE CPSU'S OVERALL CURRENT STRATEGIC CONCEPTION.

4. SOVIET OFFICIALS THUS FUNCTION WITHIN A RELATIVELY
WELL DEFINED, HIGHLY AUTHORITY CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK,
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MOST OF WHICH WE DO NOT AGREE WITH. WRITING IN 1946,
KENNAN LISTED AS ONE OF HIS RULES "DON'T ASSUME A
COMMUNITY OF AIMS... WHICH DOES NOT REALLY EXIST."
THIS PRINCIPLE REMAINS VALID, EVEN THOUGH MAJOR COMMON
AIMS HAVE EMERGED IN THE INTERVENING THREE DECADES.
BOTH WE AND THE SOVIETS ARE INTERESTED IN AVOIDING AN
EAST-WEST ARMED CONFLICT, IN PURSUING ARMS LIMITATION,
IN EXPANDING BILATERAL TRADE AND IN DEVELOPING A SERIES OF
MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL
EXCHANGES. YET OUR RESPECTIVE VISIONS OF THE FUTURE
CONTINUE TO BE ESSENTIALLY ANTITHETICAL. EACH SIDE IS
IN EFFECT BETTING THAT AN IMPROVEMENT IN U.S. SOVIET
RELATIONS IN THE SHORT AND MIDDLE RANGE WILL CONTRIBUTE
TO THE EVENTUAL REALIZATION OF ITS RESPECTIVE VISION.
MEANWHILE, THE PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT GIVES US BADLY
NEEDED INSIGHTS INTO SOVIET THINKING, AND CAN EDUCATE
THEM TO OURS. THERE IS SOME HOPE THAT, IN THE PROCESS,
THE SOVIET VISION MAY BECOME LESS RIGID, THAT PRAGMATIC
SOVIET MEANS MAY AT LEAST PARTIALLY MODIFY IDEOLOGICAL

SOVIET ENDS--BUT ONLY IF WE ARE CAREFUL AND DO OUR HOME-
WORK WELL.

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5. SOVIET POLICY-MAKING MACHINERY IS DISTINCTIVE BOTH
IN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION. THE CENTRALIZATION OF VIRTUALLY
ALL DECISION-MAKING IN THE USSR, THE IMPACT OF A CENTRALLY-
PLANNED ECONOMY AND THE EXISTENCE OF TWO HUGE, PARALLEL
BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURES (STATE AND PARTY), MAKE SOVIET
BUREAUCRACY MUCH MORE CUMBERSOME, COMPARTMENTALIZED,
AND SLOW-MOVING THAN OUR OWN. THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE
APPARATUS, FOR EXAMPLE, INCLUDES TWENTY MAJOR DEPARTMENTS,
WHILE THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT INCLUDES OVER SIXTY MINISTRIES,
19 STATE COMMITTEE AND CENTRAL AGENCIES.

6. THE HALLMARK OF THE SOVIET STRUCTURE IS CONTINUITY.
FROM THE CPSU POLITBURO AND SECRETARIAT DOWN TO THE
WORKING LEVELS OF THE VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED
IN U.S. AFFAIRS, FOR EXAMPLE, OUR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS
AS A RULE HAVE BEEN IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CURRENT POSITIONS
MUCH LONGER THAN WE HAVE. BREZHNEV HAS SERVED AS GENERAL
SECRETARY OF THE CPSU SINCE 1964 AND HAS BEEN A FULL
POLITBURO MEMBER SINCE 1957; GROMYKO BECAME FOREIGN
MINISTER IN 1957 AND HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN U.S. SOVIET
RELATIONS SINCE 1939, WHEN HE WAS CHIEF OF THE MFA'S
AMERICAN COUNTRIES DEPARTMENT; DOBRYNIN FIRST SERVED IN
WASHINGTON IN THE EARLY 1950'S AND HAS BEEN AMBASSADOR
THERE SINCE 1961; BY OUR STANDARDS, DOBRYNIN'S STAFF
SERVES LENGTHY TOURS IN THE U.S. AND IS HIGHLY SPECIALIZED
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IN U.S. AFFAIRS. AS A RESULT, OUR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS TEND TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE EXPERIENCED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE IN DEALING WITH US THAN WE WITH THEM.

7. SOVIET BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES IN HANDLING U.S. SOVIET RELATIONS ALSO DIFFER FROM THOSE USUALLY EMPLOYED IN WASHINGTON. THE TOP LEADERS IN MOSCOW NORMALLY ARE MORE INVOLVED IN THE DETAILS OF THESE RELATIONS THAN ARE THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN WASHINGTON. THE MIDDLE AND LOWER LEVEL SOVIET OFFICIALS HAVE RELATIVELY LESS AUTHORITY THAN THEIR U.S. COUNTERPARTS FOR INDEPENDENT ACTION. ONE CONSEQUENCE IS THAT SOVIET INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE CLEARED AT AN EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH LEVEL, OFTEN IN NUMBER OF BUREAUCRATIC AGENCIES IN BOTH THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT APPARATUSES. WE SEE THIS MANIFEST AT THE WORKING LEVEL WHEN SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS ARE FORCED TO STALL WHILE WAITING FOR A REVISED POSITION TO BE CLEARED, OR ARE RELUCTANT TO SEEK NEW INSTRUCTIONS BECAUSE OF THE BUREAUCRATIC FUSS THAT MIGHT ENSUE IN MOSCOW. ALTERNATIVELY, DEPENDING UPON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE TO THE SOVIET SIDE, THEIR NEGOTIATING TEAM MAY BE MORE NUMEROUS AND MORE SENIOR THAN WE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED, DUE TO A SOVIET DESIRE TO SETTLE UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS ON THE SPOT WITHOUT REFERRAL TO HIGHER AUTHORITIES.

8. SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES. THESE CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION OF SOVIET POLICY PROVIDE A FOUNDATION FOR DISCUSSING SPECIFIC SOVIET NEGOTIATING TECHNIQUES AND SUGGESTING HOW WE CAN BEST COPE WITH THEM. WE HAVE GROUPED SOVIET TECHNIQUES ACCORDING TO THREE BROAD AND SOMEWHAT OVERLAPPING CATEGORIES: APPROACH TO SPECIFIC NEGOTIATIONS, THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENTS.

(A) APPROACH

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(1) THE SOVIETS TEND TO PROCEED WITH GENERAL PROPOSITIONS, THEN FLESH OUT DETAILS; WE OFTEN PROCEED IN THE REVERSE DIRECTION; FOLLOWING THEIR PROCEDURE HAS SOME TACTICAL ADVANTAGE, SO LONG AS WE REMAIN ATTENTIVE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DETAILS ON THE BOTTOM LINE;

(2) THEY UNDERSTAND PRINCIPLE, AND IF OURS ARE STEADFAST AND CLEARLY EXPRESSED, THEY WILL

RECOGNIZE AND PERHAPS RESPECT THEM, HOWEVER GRUDGINGLY;
WE THEREFORE SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO MAKE OUR PRINCIPLES
CLEAR AT AN EARLY STAGE;

(3) THEY OFTEN DESIRE AGREEMENT FOR THE
SAKE OF AGREEMENT -- TO PRESERVE THE IMAGE OF A DYNAMIC
SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN POLICY; WHILE WE MAY NOT ALWAYS
WISH TO CONTRIBUTE TO SUCH IMAGERY, IN SOME SECONDARY
MATTERS THIS SOVIET MOTIVATION CAN BE USED TO ADVANTAGE,
BY INSISTING ON ACCEPTABLE PRECISION IN THE FURTHERANCE
OR OUR INTERESTS BEFORE CONCLUDING THE AGREEMENT;

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(4) THEY OFTEN ATTEMPT TO USE THEIR
POSITION AS THE BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION; WE SHOULD BE
ARMED WITH A FULLY ARTICULATED U.S. POSITION AT THE
EARLIERST POSSIBLE MOMENT; BECUASE OF THEIR BUREAUCRATIC
PROBLEMS, OUR EARLY INITIATIVE MAY ON OCCASION WIN THE DAY;

(5) THE SOVIETS HAVE ENDLESS PATIENCE;
WE ARE OF TEN IN A HURRY; A NEGOTIATOR WHO FACES A DEADLINE,
REAL OR IMAGINED, IS CLEARLY AT A DISADVANTAGE.

(B) NEGOTIATION

(1) IN QUESTIONS OF U.S. SOVIET RELATIONS,
DETAILS RECEIVE HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION ON THE SOVIET SIDE;
WE MUST MATCH THIS AS NECESSARY; AT THE WORKING LEVEL,
PROFOUND SENSITIVITIES AS TO REGIONS, ISSUES AND PERSON-
ALITIES CAN CROP UP IN THE MOST INNOCENT-SEEMING PROJECT;
U.S. NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD RECEIVE A THROUGH BRIEFING BY
THE DEPARTMENT AND (IF THE MEETING IS IN THE USSR) BY

THE EMBASSY, BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH THEIR BUSINESS;

(2) THE SOVIETS DO NOT LACK AUDACITY IN
RE-INTERPRETING THE PAST, ATTEMPTING TO WIN A DEBATING
POINT, OR TRYING TO PLACE US ON THE DEFENSIVE; WE
SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO CALL THEIR BLUFF AND DISMISS
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THEIR BLUSTER;

(3) WHEN BASIC PRINCIPLES CONFLICT,
AGREEMENT CAN STILL BE POSSIBLE ON CONCRETE ISSUES,
BUT THE SOVIETS WILL NOT "SIGN ON" TO REFUTATION OF
THEIR PRINCIPLES; ATTEMPTS TO CHALLENGE THESE IN A
FORMAL AGREEMENT SIMPLY DELAY GETTING AN AGREEMENT
WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE BE DESIRABLE; IF PURSUED PUBLICLY,
QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE CAN TORPEDO AN INFORMAL BUT
PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT (E.G. THE HISTORY OF THE
KISSINGER-GROMYKO UNDERSTANDING REGARDING THE JACKSON-
VANIK AMENDMENT TO THE TRADE ACT);

(4) THEY ARE EXTRAORDINARILY RANK AND
PROTOCOL CONSCIOUS AND CAN BE OFFENDED BY REMARKS OR
ACTIONS WHICH WOULD SCARCELY BE NOTICED IN THE U.S.;
WHILE APPARENTLY CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONS MAY DEVELOP
BETWEEN U.S. AND SOVIET NEGOTIATORS, THE SOVIETS SHOULD
NOT BE EXPECTED TO RELAX THE TONE OF OFFICIAL MEETINGS
AND THEY MAY BECOME UNEASY IF THE U.S. SIDE ATTEMPTS
TO DO SO; CHUMMINESS IN ALL OUR DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS
IS TO BE AVOIDED.

(5) NORMALLY THE SOVIETS STICK TO THE
LETTER OF A FORMAL, UNAMBIGUOUS AGREEMENT; THEY INVARIABLY
ATTEMPT TO SEASEL AND CHIP AWAY WHEN THERE IS A FUZZINESS
AND LACK OF PRECISION; AT TIMES ABSOLUTE PRECISION MAY
NOT BE ATTAINABLE ON ALL POINTS, BUT AMBIGUITIES SHOULD
ALWAYS BE HELD TO A MINIMUM BY FORCEFUL INSISTENCE
ON NAILING DOWN DETAILS BEFORE CONCLUDING AN AGREEMENT;

(6) THEY HAVE A LEGALISTIC BENT AND WILL
ATTEMPT TO GET AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE DOWN IN WRITING
CONCERNING OBLIGATIONS INCURRED BY BOTH SIDES, ALTHOUGH
THEY WILL CONFINE THEIR OWN COMMITMENTS TO ORAL EXPRESSION
IF WE ALLOW THEM TO; OFTEN THIS PROCESS OF FORALIZATION
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OCCURS UNDER HARRIED CIRCUMSTANCES, JUST BEFORE THE MEETINGS ARE SCHEDULED TO CLOSE; WE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY SURE BEFORE SIGNING THAT THE U.S. SIDE WILL BE ABLE TO DELIVER ON ALL ITS UNDERTAKINGS; THE SOVIETS RARELY FORGET ANYTHING THAT HAS BEEN AGREED TO EITHER IN WRITING OR ORALLY, AND IF WE FAIL TO DELIVER THEY WILL USE THAT FACT AGAIN AND AGAIN TO JUSTIFY THEIR OWN NONCOMPLIANCE;

(C) IMPLEMENTATION

(1) THEY WILL DOGGEDLY ENFORCE THOSE ASPECTS OF AGREEMENTS IN THEIR INTEREST; WE MUST DO NO LESS, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF DEVOTING CLOSE AND UNREMITTING ATTENTION -- OF TEN AT HIGH LEVELS -- TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENTS; NOTHING IS GAINED FROM OVERLOOKING "SMALL" INFRACTIONS; RATHER THAN GOOD WILL, THE RESULT IS SIMPLY MORE OF THE SAME, UNTIL THE ENTIRE AGREEMENT MAY BE THREATENED.

(2) THEY UNDERSTAND RECIPROCITY, AND WILL ACT IN ACCORD WITH IT IF WE INSIST; IF WE DO NOT INSIST; THEY WILL SPARE NO EFFORT TO DERIVE A UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE;

(3) THEY ARE ADEPT AT SELLING THE SAME HORSE TWICE, OR MORE, BY FAILING FULLY TO IMPLEMENT THOSE PARTS OF AN AGREEMENT ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE OTHER SIDE, THEN SEEKING TO RENEGOTIATE THESE PARTS SO AS TO CUT THEIR LOSSES OR GAIN NEW COUNTER-CONCESSIONS (E.G. THEIR SEEMINGLY FIRM BUT ACTUALLY SLIPPERY AGREEMENT TO FIX ONE-THIRD OF BILATERAL MARINE CARGO ON U.S. MERCHANT SHIPS);

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(4) IN MATTERS INVOLVING PRINCIPLE AND
RECIPROCITY, NONE IS TOO SMALL TO WARRANT OUR ATTENTION
AND VIGOROUS EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN; UNTIL THEY LEARN WE
CANNOT BE SHORTCHANGED, THEIR EFFORTS TO DO SO WILL
CONTINUE AND SPREAD FROM THE PETTY TO THE TRULY SIGNIFICANT;

(5) THEIRS IS A SLOW-MOVING, BUREAUCRATIC
SYSTEM, BUT THEIR BUREAUCRATIC PROBLEMS SHOULD NEVER BE
ACCEPTED AS VALID GROUNDS FOR THEIR FAILING TO MEET A
COMMITMENT; IF THEY DO NOT ACT IN ACCORD WITH AGREEMENTS,
THIS MUST BE POINTED OUT EARLY ON, WITH SOME INDICATION
OF OUR LIKELY REACTION -- CALCULATED WHENEVER POSSIBLE TO
DAMAGE THEIR INTERESTS MORE THAN OURS -- IF THEIR NON-
COMPLIANCE PERSISTS;

(6) WE SHOULD NEVER BLUFF, AND ALWAYS
PROCEED AS WE HAVE WARNED; ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN WE DEMON-
STRATE OUR FIRMNESS IN TIME TO MODIFY SOVIET BEHAVIOR
BEFORE IT RESULTS IN A CONFRONTATION.
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